

Projects of Note

PROJECT OF THE WEEK

Montezuma Castle: Restoring the Past to Rebuild the Future *United World College to host grand reopening October 20*



by Stephanie Stubbs, Assoc. AIA

Managing Editor

Former Energy Secretary, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and Representative from New Mexico Bill Richardson will launch the grand opening of the new Bartos Institute for the Constructive Engagement of

Conflict October 20 at the Armand Hammer United World College in Montezuma, N. Mex. In its former life, the institute was none other than Montezuma Castle, Western playground for the rich and famous just before the turn of the 20th century. Einhorn Yaffee Prescott, Architect and Engineering PC, is the architectural alchemist working to give the building its new life.

Spectacular structure, superlative setting

At the foothills of the breathtaking Sangre de Cristo Mountains lies Montezuma, N. Mex., which is just outside of Las Vegas (the other one, in New Mexico), which is not too far from Santa Fe. Montezuma is home to hot springs, the restorative power of which has been legend for centuries. These famous springs led the Santa Fe Railroad to develop the area into a resort town, the centerpiece of which was Montezuma Castle, some 90,000-square-foot of Queen Anne confection designed by none other than Chicago's Burnham and Root in 1884. In its heyday, the world-class resort counted among its clientele Theodore Roosevelt, Jesse James, Ulysses S. Grant, and Japanese Emperor Hirohito.

The spectacular castle, the first building in New Mexico to boast electric lights, paid for that privilege when faulty wiring caused a fire that burned the building to the ground in 1884. Rebuilt the following year, it was open only for a few months before it burned to the ground again. The third construction proved the charm: The Phoenix, as it was called, opened in 1886. The hotel enjoyed a run of popularity for about a decade, and then sunk into a steady decline. The railroads sold the behemoth building to the YMCA for \$1 in 1903; soon after, the Jesuits took it over as a seminary, which it remained for almost 70 years. In 1972, however, after

years of delayed maintenance, the building was deemed too dangerous for habitation and left empty.

In 1981, the castle ruin saw its first glimpse of redemption when international financier and philanthropist Armand Hammer bought it—and the surrounding land—to create The Armand Hammer United World College of the American West.

Help from the Trust

As the school established its footings, the castle, which had been heavily vandalized and structurally damaged, sat as a vacant shell for years. The privately funded college pondered its fate and an appropriate new use—as well as how to raise the \$10 million needed to restore it to former glory. A major boost in public awareness and a boon to fundraising bloomed when the National Trust for Historic Preservation placed the Montezuma Castle on its “Eleven Most Endangered” list in 1997 and declared it the first building west of the Mississippi River to be designated one of “America’s Treasures.” The Trust removed it from the list two years later when the college began its fund drive to restore the building.

EYP is the architect for the transformation of the castle as the heart of the United World College's campus, as well as for preparing a campus master plan and designing a new field house. Stabilizing the building has been a major challenge for the architect and for contractor Bradbury Stamm of Albuquerque.

continued on next page



Burnham and Root's colossal Montezuma Castle, snuggled at the foothills of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo mountains, will soon be restored to its former glory by Einhorn Yaffee Prescott.

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continued from previous page

que. Years of neglect and piles of bat guano—not to mention lead paint and asbestos—needed to be alleviated. The situation was complicated by outdated structural practices as well as construction that probably was not as sound as it should have been in the rush to rebuild after the second fire.

The structure has now been stabilized and work proceeds to fit out the interiors for EYP's new program, which includes a dining hall, classrooms, conference rooms, residential spaces, executive offices, and recreational space. Its grand south-facing veranda, removed because of deterioration during its Jesuit era, has been completely restored, as have its stained glass windows and turreted towers. The castle will in fact contain many of its old touches of grandeur, including its magnificent carved ash-ceilinged entranceway, and some new, such as eight-foot-high glass chandeliers by noted glass artist Dale Chihuly. The chandeliers will grace EYP's *piece de resistance*, the restored grand dining room. Its 60-foot trusses, reinforced with steel, are column-free once more. The grand room will be part of the Bartos Institute for Constructive Engagement, a center devoted to international conflict resolution.

Hope for the future

The newly restored dining room as a setting in which conflict can begin to be resolved is a fitting use for the United World Colleges, which make for an interesting story in themselves. The first, Atlantic College in Wales, was founded in 1962 "to create a school where the youth of the world could unite, to gain a knowledge and understanding of a variety of races and cultures." Earl Mountbatten of Burma served as the founding president of the International Council of the United World Colleges, later succeeded by HRH Prince Charles. (The current president is



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE UNITED WORLD COLLEGE

Re-creation of the grand, south-facing veranda is under way.

Queen Noor of Jordan [BA in architecture, Princeton, 1974] and the president of the UWC International Council is Nelson Mandela.)

The Armand Hammer College, named after its founding international industrialist, joined the group in 1981. Today there are eight other United World Colleges, in Canada, Italy, Swaziland, Singapore, Venezuela, Hong Kong, Norway, and India.

Most of the colleges host 200 students, aged 16-19, who earn international baccalaureate degrees,

an internationally recognized pre-university degree. UWC students are chosen on merit, regardless of race, creed, color, background or financial ability, and the majority are awarded scholarships. Service to the community is an integral part of the schools' culture.

It appears that the school is eager to show off its new masterpiece as it prepares to host tours of the college and campus grounds and this piece of history reopens to the public October 20. For more information, visit www.uwc-usa.org, or call 505-454-4200. ■



The castle's distinctive brick turrets had to be completely rebuilt.